

Israel to form governing coalition

Israel's Labour party has voted to join the right wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu and create a new governing coalition. Ehud Barak's proposal gained 57.9% of the vote. Paul Wood reports:

This vote means that Benjamin Netanyahu can now form a government, one that might be more internationally acceptable with Labour, than without. This will help Mr Netanyahu, especially in Washington, where Israeli officials privately worry that they face **the most sceptical administration in decades**.

The Labour leader, Ehud Barak, said just before the vote that he would be **a counterweight**, not **a fig leaf**, for Mr Netanyahu. As well as five **ministerial portfolios**, he also said he'd gained an agreement that the peace process would continue and that previous deals with the Palestinians would **be honoured**. His was **an appeal to pragmatism** rather than **ideological purity**.

The risk for Mr Barak is that some Labour members would accuse him of putting **personal ambition for office** first and will opt to keep their **principles unsullied**, heading for the **back benches in the Knesset**. The question is whether this historic force in Israeli politics will be permanently split after this vote. That will be something of a problem for Mr Netanyahu as well since it may delay by a few more days the forming of his new government.

Paul Wood, BBC News, Jerusalem

Vocabulary and definitions

the most sceptical administration in decades	here, it refers to the current US government, which is less supportive of Israeli policies than previous administrations
a counterweight	a way of balancing the power of the two parties
a fig leaf	a means of covering up the real political issues and hiding the truth
ministerial portfolios	official government positions
be honoured	to keep promises, to carry out the terms and conditions as set out in previous peace deals
an appeal to pragmatism	an effort to solve problems in a practical, realistic way
ideological purity	keeping to a fixed set of beliefs or theories in how to solve problems
personal ambition for office	his own desire to gain political power
principles unsullied	ideas and political thoughts staying truthful and uncompromised
back benches in the Knesset	the less powerful positions within the Israeli government

More on this story: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7962962.stm

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/03/090325_witn_israel_page.shtml